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POETRY QUARTERLY

Edited by WREY GARDINER.

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Vol. IV. Spring 1942 No. 1

Editorial

The gutter press has now dropped its search for approved war poets. None of the possible candidates, it seems, come up to the high standard required by the readers of the evening potted commentator. From this the non-reading public which is, in terms of figures, practically the whole population of the country assumes that poetry is a thing of the past romantically cultivated by the more picturesque Elizabethans. The truth, well known to Keats' 'little clan,' of course, is the reverse. The war has had a very decided effect on all poets worthy of the name. The verse produced here in the last two years has been far more significant and interesting than that of any period before 1940. And some of it has been great. All our already well known writers such as T. S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell, Stephen Spender, have produced their best work, and a large volume of poems is being created by the younger poets still little known to many of even the small reading public as Vernon Watkins, Henry Treece, Alun Lewis, Nicholas Moore and many others. But the steel and concrete facades of Fleet Street still mask the narrow alley and the foetid courtyard with its murky backstairs attitude. It is true that few people now expect from them anything at all but turgid platitudes and recriminations after the event. It is they not the poets, who are out of touch with reality.

With this number POETRY QUARTERLY enters its fourth year, and a word on editorial policy is perhaps not out of place. It always has been and still remains our unalterable intention to print what we consider the best MSS we receive. That the majority of these are in the modern idiom and manner is due probably to the fact that it is the younger writers who are producing more and the older less. In any case the quality is very definitely on the side of the more contemporary work sent to us. We shall continue to print those in traditional forms and content but only if they reach the very high standard of the older poets who created them centuries ago. And they rarely do.

We receive an increasing number of MSS by young writers and those who have never written before. It is not our intention to imitate an eighteenth century fore-runner when rejection slips were evidently unknown, and the more brutal method was adopted of a notice on the fly leaf of the periodical itself stating bluntly "THE LOVE ELEGY" by J.B. is received but has not sufficient merit to obtain a place. If MSS are promising they will be sure of a sympathetic hearing and, if sufficiently memorable, inclusion. We would only discourage those who have not troubled to read a new book of verse or magazine for the last twenty years and are therefore out of touch with contemporary trends. There is such a thing as the Singapore mentality in poetry.

From THE GREY WALLS PRESS—APRIL

LYRA : An Anthology of Modern Lyric. Edited by Alex Comfort& Robert Greacen with a Preface by Herbert Read. Poems by Henry Treece, Vernon Watkins, Nicholas Moore, J. C. Hall, Francis Scarfe, Anne Ridler and Robert Herring. Crn. 8vo. 5/-

The Lay of Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke, by R. M. Rilke, translated by Stefan K. Schimanski and L. Phillips. **SHORTLY**

Rainer Maria Rilke

Letter to a young Poet

Translated by Andrew Pearse.

z.Z. Worpswede bei Bremen
am 16. Juli, 1903.

I LEFT Paris some ten days ago, really unwell and tired, and made my way to a great northerly plain, whose wide expanse and peace and sky is to bring me back to health again. But I came right into a long spell of rain which is trying to clear up a little bit for the first time to-day across the restlessly drifting country; and I am using this first bright moment to greet you, my dear Sir.

My excellent Herr Kappus: I have left a letter of yours unanswered for a long time; not that I might have forgotten it—on the contrary: it was one of the kind which one does read again when one finds it among all the other letters, and I recognised you in it as clearly as if you stood before me. It was the letter dated May 2nd.—you must surely remember it. Reading it as I do now in the vast quietness of this remote place, then those heart-searchings of yours concerning life move me still more than when I reacted to them in Paris, where everything is tuned to a different pitch and is lost in the overwhelming din which sets all things trembling. Here, with a vast expanse of land about me, across which the winds from the sea are blowing, here I feel that nowhere is there a man who can give an answer to those questions and feelings of yours, which have their existence in the depths of your being; for even the best people go astray in words when they mean to portray the tenderest things, the most untellable things. But however, I do not believe that you will be denied a solution if you hold fast to things like those by whose virtue my power of sight is even now

recovering. If you depend on Nature, on what is simple in her, on what is so small that hardly anyone sees it, and which can grow to greatness and immensity all unawares; if you have this love for the insignificant and if you try to win the confidence of that which appears poor with the simple humility of a servant: then everything will become easier, more unified and reconcileable for you, not perhaps in your intelligence, which stands back in amazement, but in the inner recesses of your consciousness, your awareness and your understanding. You are so young, so very much at the beginning of things and I beg of you as far as it is within my power, my dear Sir, to be patient with all that which lies unresolved in your heart, and to try to include the problems themselves in your love like rooms which are locked up, and books written in an hitherto undeciphered language. Do not yet search for answers which cannot be given because you have not yet the capacity to live them. Yes, that is the whole point, to live everything. Live the questions here and now. Then gradually without noticing it some far off day you will live yourself into the answer. Perhaps, indeed, you contain within yourself the potentiality for moulding and shaping, as an especially happy and pure way of life: educate yourself to that way,—but suffer what proceeds from it with the greatest confidence, and if indeed it comes from your will, from some innermost need of your own, then accept it wholeheartedly, and hate nothing. But they are grievous tasks that are laid upon us, for nearly everything that is serious is hard, and all is serious.

When once you recognise that, and out of yourself, out of your inborn characteristics, your very nature you begin to hammer out your own personal attitude towards sex, quite independent of conventional standards and accepted morality, then you are bound to shake off the fear of loosing yourself, and of becoming unworthy of your noblest possession.

The physical enjoyment of sex is an experience of the body no different from pure sight or the pure feeling with which a beautiful fruit fills the tongue. It is a great unlimited experience vouchsafed to us, an intelligence of the world, the richness and the splendour of all knowledge. There is nothing bad in our experiencing it, but it is bad that everyone misuses and squanders it, employing it rather as a stimulus when life is dull and flagging, and so dissipating those crests of experience instead of binding them together. People have even made eating into something different: lack on the one hand and superabundance on the other have distorted the clearness of these elemental necessities, and all the simple profound essential processes through which life renews itself have likewise become twisted. But the individual can clarify them for himself and live them more clearly, (and if not the individual, then indeed the lonely man). He can call to mind that all beauty in animals and plants is a soft unceasing form of love and longing, and he can see the animal as he sees the plant—patiently, willingly being united, multiplying and growing, not out of physical suffering nor out of physical lust, but by bowing themselves down before necessities which are greater than lust and suffering, and more powerful than will and resistance.

Oh! that mankind would in deepest humility become aware of this secret which penetrates to the core of earth's minutest members. Oh, that man would bear, suffer and feel it, how grievous it is, instead of playing lightly with it. That he would stand awed by his own fruitfulness, which is but one, whether it appears to spring from the mind or from the body. For even spiritual creation has its roots in the physical, and partakes of the same being with it: only it is like a tenderer, more enraptured, more timeless recurrence of bodily yearning. "The thought of being a creator, of bringing forth, of making a composition" (as you put it) is nothing without its great

and continued affirmation and realisation in the world, is nothing without the great chorus of response from things and animals. Its enjoyment is only so much the more indescribably lovely and rich because it is charged with inherited memories of the begetting and bringing forth of millions. In a single creative thought a thousand forgotten nights of love live again, and fill it full with lofty sublimity. And those who come together in the nights and lie wrapped and lulled in desire are performing a worthy task; they are storing up sweetness, strength and profundity for the song of some poet to come who will rise up to tell of the untellable ecstasy.

Invoke the future. Even if they are in error, embracing blindly, nevertheless the future comes on, a new being arises, and from the soil of chance grows up the law by virtue of which a stronger and more resistant seed penetrates the ovary which opens out to meet it.

Do not be misled by appearances. Deep down everything becomes law. For those who live the secret in error and untruth (and they are many) loose it only for themselves and pass it on like a sealed letter without being aware of it. Do not go astray over the multitude of names and the complexity of cases. Perhaps a great motherhood embraces all in a common yearning. The beauty of the virgin, a being who, it is so finely said, "has as yet performed nothing" is motherhood in anxiety and longing, in preparation and presentiment. The beauty of the mother is motherhood in service, and in the grey-headed old woman it is a great memory. As I see it there is motherhood in man too, both in body and in spirit. In begetting he is in some manner giving birth, and it is truly giving birth when he creates from the fullness of his soul. Perhaps the sexes are more closely related than is believed generally, and it may be that the great renewal of the world will come about through the achievement by men and women of freedom from

thwarted feelings and repugnance, when they seek not as opponents but as members of the same family and as neighbours to carry in simplicity, earnestness and patience the grievous burden of human existence.

But the lonely man can even now prepare and build with his own hands, (which are less prone to go astray) all that which may one day be possible to many. And so, my good Sir, cherish your loneliness and suffer the pain which it induces with a lovely song of complaint. You say that those who are about you are far away from you. This shows that in the distance around you the process is beginning; and when your environment is distant, then your fullest extent is already far beyond the horizon, under the stars and very great. In your growing rejoice that there is none whom you can take with you; and be well disposed towards those who stay behind, be steadfast and composed before them and do not upset them with your doubts nor shock them with your utter confidence and joy, who are not able to grasp it themselves. Find out some simple and honest means of intercourse with them which need not necessarily alter when you yourself change and change again. Cherish in them the life that is in a form which is foreign to you and be forbearing to them that are growing old and fear that loneliness in which you trust. Make certain you do not provide further matter for that drama which is always played out between children and parents; it demands much of the strength of the children and withers the parents' love, which takes effect and warms even when it is not comprehended. Do not require any advice from them, nor rely on getting any understanding; but believe on a love which is preserved for you as an inheritance, and have faith to believe that in this love there is a strength and a virtue from which you must not escape, however far you may travel.

It is splendid that you are entering a profession which makes you independent and which leaves you

your own master in every sense. Wait patiently to see whether your inner life feels itself narrowed by the mould of this profession. It seems to me very difficult and very demanding, since it is bounded by great conventions and hardly leaves any room for a personal interpretation of its tasks. But your loneliness will be a home and a refuge to you even in the strangest environment, and with it as your starting point you will always be able to find your way. All my good wishes are ready to follow you, and my trust and confidence is with you.

Stefan K. Schimanski

The Boy

On a little wheelbarrow, under a yellow tree, sits a little boy. And his face is all sadness and resigned.

"Blow hard," I shout, "hard like the wind and the cart will move as if by itself."

"It will not," replies the boy.

"Then take my arms and with their strength the world will move around itself," and I push the cart and again I push, but it is all in vain. And the boy with the eyes like cemeteries gazes to the ground and with four words he cuts open my wounds and throws pepper in them: "That is your soul," he says pointing to the wheelbarrow. And with four little daggers he pierces my skin, in my heart he tears a hole and I retreat as fast as I can, but I never reach the foot of the wall, and he follows steadily, step by step and inch by inch . . . .

Why is the world silent like the ice? Why does the world laugh when I cry? Why in the moment of agony does the sun begin to rise? At last he speaks. He throws the daggers away into the tree

and he takes my helmet and my sword and he says: "You know?"

I nod. "I have . . . ."

"Be silent," he cuts me short, "many times I have seen you emptying pail after pail of senseless shrieks. Many times have I seen your promises melting away like the snow in the sun. For you have the world in your throat but your heart in the moon, and they sent me to bring it back to earth."

I see the dagger in the tree, but the dagger is so far away from me that it is no longer in his hand. And I take courage into my mouth and into both my fists I take my strength, and ask: "Who are you, strange child, and of whom do you come to warn me?"

"Of the lily."

"Are you mad?" I shout at the boy when I suddenly notice two little wings attached to his back.

I hesitate. "Are you an angel?" I ask cautiously, "an angel? A messenger from above?"

He does not answer.

"I know no 'above.' I know no God. You are not my messenger, you are my foe. Go I tell you, for the fountain of blood springing from so young a corpse looks ugly when it sparkles in the fading moonlight."

But the boy does not move.

"Go," I shout, "or the fountain of blood will look ugly in the fading moonlight."

But the boy remains.

And I wrestle my sword from him and strike it down hard on his wings. "Where is the God to witness the blood watering the fields? Where is the God to stop the sand creeping slowly into the eyes where it hides the cemeteries of suffering? There is no God: everyone is his own God. Salvation does not come from above. If you hope for salvation then

redeem yourself. You are your own judge and your own God." And my sword strikes down again and again, mercilously. But the boy remains and the wings remain.

"That is futile," he says, "The cart will move on and the wings will disappear and so will I as soon as you have reclaimed the very heart of your own, and not before." The little daggers fall from the tree into his hands. "Ride for thirteen days and thirteen nights over that dune to the north towards a mountain with a well. It is wisdom you have to reach. It is the path from which nothing must deter you, and which alone makes the sun rise from behind the mountain. May I now return to my knight?"

"Will you forgive me?"

He says "Yes."

"And forget?"

"Never!" he retorts.

From DEATH KNIGHT LOVE AND DEVIL, A Fantasy—which need not necessarily be a Fantasy.

To be issued shortly in a limited edition by THE GREY WALLS PRESS.

Henry Treece

Ophelia

The frail girl floating with the stream
Saw life to be a sea-green dream

Of flitting ghosts she once had feared
Who stroked her face and disappeared.

She watched the old man fast asleep
And saw the muttering figure creep

Away with poison-horn in hand;
But this she did not understand.

She saw the curtains move, and heard
The scream that started as a word.

She watched the Queen fill up the bowl
To barter two crowns for a soul,

And while the Players spoke their words
She saw the old King dreaming swords.

She watched the pale boy kiss a bone
And knew then that his love had gone,

So opened her clenched hand to see
The button that let madness free.

And so her wound began to flower;
Her head was crowned with blossom-shower.

Swift carp caressed her quiet breast
And linnets carolled from the nest.

She called to conies on the bank
And smiled, and sighed, and slowly sank.

And from his bough the squirrel said,
"There's no more weeping when you're dead."

John Hall

Life is Our Problem

Life is our problem. The squirrel cracks it
Like a nut with his teeth, the cat plays
With the trapped agony of it, and we
Solve it by any means, in many ways.

First it was birth; for that brave genesis
Of limbs and thought and feeling was hard won
In the battle of blood, and a seed was
A suddenly saddened child of wind and sun.

Then it was fear; dread in the dome of darkness
And the lonely ghost remembering its room
And the child in its hopeless helplessness
Crying all night for the warm womb.

Then it was doubt; hands pointing to the hill
Led us to a deep secretive river.
Naked we swam the breadth of it, but never
Forgave the false cheat of it, the first chill.

Life was our problem. Yes, the clue to it
Was more than a hand held or a tongue spoke,
And though from the river a weed beckoned
Water in no manner could break our stroke.

For, broaching each crisis then, our principle
Was certain and fearless, and could discover
New ways of life, new politics that were
Compatible, engendering each other.

Life is our problem still—not to deny it
To the foreign heart, the embittered hand.
In the fear of a bomb the living child endures
More shame than a man can bear, or understand.

Roy McFadden

The Dreamer

To-day? To-morrow? Ever?
I talk with the wind and say good-night to the hill,
that other dreamer beneath the naked sky,
older, and wiser, and nearer the truth than I.

To-day? To-morrow? Never?
That would be death indeed,
and a dry-eyed loneliness under the shouting stars.
There would be futility in living:
taking and taking, and none to accept the giving.

Some day I will open my window as she passes
and thank her for being beautiful. She will understand,
and stop, and talk awhile beneath my window, while
the sand
turns to stone in the hour-glass of good-byes.

Or, walking in the street, stop suddenly, and look—
there will be no need for words—
as blossoms bury the steel-ribbed streets
and newsboys change into singing-birds.

To-day? To-morrow? Ever?
I ask my friend, but he is surly
and chases the birds behind the sleepy hill,
as I dream beneath the chequered counterpane
and watch the song-birds leave my window-sill.

Leslie Phillips

March Night

I shall never stir nor ever steer
That distant, leering face
From regions blue and rigid
To this my livid wounded world.
But O cruel black, ungodly point
Shine brighter, darken shadows,
For we have need, have need
Of your unwinking metal stare.

Star and brick hang strangely broken,
Caught in an instant of moon
When murder seems as sweet
As a kiss on the silvered floor.
There Love and Death lie fused,
And even in the stone's embrace
The beautiful head becomes a skull
That grins in the grass and bracken.

Bark stripped on the smooth tree slope
Retreats and stutters, splits
And every mark is a scar on a year;
Deep in the hollow, Time is dying.
Boughs are strong in their straining
And each is an arm entreating,
But how can I know they are praying
When they are dead, are dead?

Dare I doubt that the anger will burst,
With all the bristling horns
Of a fury-feathered heart?
I sing that now the wall and the window
Suffer no agony equal to mine,
Until the ungracious, the ungifted
Gathers the dirt that descends
To ravish the passionate breast.

Burst of light bids a sky beware,
And warned I am answered
Watching the stars and their shadows
Mocking the eyes of man.
Why cower, why crouch, there's nothing
Can hinder the bomb in its path,
None who can plead for safe encounter
With arrows of war, of war?

Weir crumbles each image, plunging
The fragments into the disc,
Where I who roam on a secret bridge
Can see the moon murdered,
The walls wasted and trees torn.
O Heart, O Life, my heart and life
Are pearls in a pool of peace.

Robert Greacen

In Time of War

Everywhere the elegies are making for the times,
The grinning epitaphs are straining from the men of rhymes,
The tragedy of farce plays to a dwindling house,
The Acts peel softly, and no one will rouse.

In Britain now white anger trembles for those
Who bleed on their own cross, whose hopes and loves
Are choking; for theirs is the personal anguish and sorrow,
Who have neither flare nor taper for any to-morrow.

What can be praised now but the firm core
At the heart, the shaft probing the silent ore
Of love . . . . of love, warm, personal fresh and new
That shall raise again those things our dragons slew?

G. S. Fraser

Elegy for certain Resolutions

My arrowy flights, more speed than solace,
Depart: they feel, I know, like swallows,
Summer decay and this cold trunk survive,
And in this leafless intricate tracery
Only tough bark and crystalline frost will thrive.
I now no more can dream
To drink new life of the habitual stream
Or in the hail that beats upon my head:
It is not just the summer's finery,
The leaf and flower, token of a green tree,
It is the sap and energy are dead.

I used to ride upon a horse, with reins
Curved in the fingers of a feeble hand,
Would play at single-stick on Saturdays,
Had Algebra and Euclid to understand:
Shirker of Rugby, swam—refrains,
Timed to the half-learned swimmer's arm that plies
To carve the water into precious stones,
Of Keats and Shelley, many a phrase,
Bursting like mercury before my eyes . . . .
And every season toughening my bones.

Lay ill! how long, and heard strange trains
Perhaps the seething of my brains,
Rumbling on winter afternoons,
At four o'clock had tea with scones,
And while I ate lapped up detective stories:
Aware obscurely of the purple quilt,
The small square tea-tray with the sugar spilt,
But more directly of the admiring chorus
Of Parker to Lord Peter Wimsey's tricks,
And the unburied body pacing Styx . . . .

An enormous vista opened out before me,
This acquaintance to make, this truth to asseverate,
Nothing could be too difficult or bore me:

I should find out all about ethics, logic, science . . . .
Only at night the small print sneered defiance!
Then as the studious eye grew duller,
And as the heavy head grew fuller,
Life quickened less under the sensitive hand . . . .
The ear began to fumble for the beat,
The mind was lost in the syntax of Latin prose:
The memory overburdened with words and words
Came to the stage where the single vision curds
And a frozen peep-show photo is all one knows.

"To live by feeling!" One had to countermand
That order, finding the tact for the matter gone.
No longer so strangely the sun shone
In the dark northern winter. Quiet the brood
Of sorrows, now—beneath too calm a hood!

Wrey Gardiner

Still Time at Night

The smoke rises and the fires are banked
In the damp dream world of a northern night
Shifting with the streaming concentric dances
Of the ghost pale glances of unhappy girls.

Feathering in the hedges the flutter of an unhopeful
spring
Full of the lies of nature and the taunting frost
Flies the uneasy coach-builder before the fleering wind,
Knowing the turn of time may yet restore his broken
throne.

For the old roads are there still and the way practised
By here and there a fitful group of men
Waiting for the sane wave to turn the wheel,
Hoping in the bleak night for the light finger of the
tide.

Alex Comfort

Plow Monday

A cold winter—winds that are tunnel damp:
goes forth sailing his heavy field and sees
the truculent flier's shadow cross his plow.

There is no love in such a season. Leaves
his woman, leaves the judging of warm cattle—
the lighted beerhouse, the brave walking home.

Begets no children on the golden straws:
crosses his thumbs against the flow of battles,
the raw pit at his door, the distant mutter of
tidings,

plows up the year's rib. There is no desiring.
The woman is not as she was. The drops
of the sad tree greet him whenever he lifts the
latch.

Thinks in these skeleton days of how in woods
he saw the fall of hair bright as new straw—
slept in a dream beside an imagined child.

Ian Bancroft

The Remnant

But winter brings its minor consolations
(O smile not now you lover).
This iron season with its crackling kisses
beds down old earth, once lusty rover.

Hawk-high the bead-eyed stars wink down
and grimace as the moon rubs shoulders;
only the sea's long tearful fooling
shelters the shrinking human shadows.

The sand that's sifting through your hour-glass
slips sighing through your fingers, lover:
sing him of silence, the day-rim's quiet,
slow-circling far beyond recover.

Lack what is lost and pray its passing.
Weep the wave claws on the sour sand;
low-hung, the storm-clouds ghosting find
fierce continents to root and rend.

But winter brings its minor consolations,
pain's numbed and clean hopes rise;
watching, we whet the wind's sharp blade
with tears and moonlight in our eyes.

Norman Nicholson

Songs of the Island

Still we climb, higher we climb,
Through the bracken in the dark combe,
Through the bilberries and the wild thyme,

Through the mist, through the rain,
Above the low clouds, above the tarn,
Following the track towards the remembered cairn.

There a sheld-duck's flight from the fells,
Is the boundary between the owl's house and the gull's.
The sand and shingle and broken shells.

There, westward, there, stretches the sea,
Beyond the bare shore, beyond the promontory,
Cloud-like the water beneath a watery sky.

Still we climb, and higher,
Remembering the horizon, staring far,
For there, if the mist shifts, if the sky lifts, there,

There, as we remember it, there, lies,
As we hoped for it, under westward skies,
As we dreamed of it, the island beyond the light of
our eyes.

Ian L. Serraillier

Benedicite omnia germinantia in terra Domino

Already powerful the green wheat rows split
the earth, routing her brown frigidity,
and primrose and buttercup to buy us
delight in meadows squander their gold.
By ferry paths willows in salutary
Maydress line the river's royal avenue,
lifting bright heads in praise where pass
in splendour the first red admirals.

And at evening the secure cottage, gathered
to her forest family, listens to midge-tale
and roundelay; pear trees comfort her walls
with manifold spread arms, where white blossoms
bud from crucifixion, and where below
I pause to receive their sanctity.

Sydney D. Tremayne

Leaf

Were you to die this hour
how you would yearn towards this leaf,
counting each vein, each green
channel of life! How you would turn,
longing, towards the power,
the joy that mounts to meet its hour,
fleet hour that bursts to bloom
and bears its doom of due decline.

And you, foreknowing fall,
foreknowing diminishing pride,
the ebb of time, the pain
of the imperative denied,
knowing that being folds
the seed of death within each cell,
would ask in that clear hour
no question of the universe
but yearn, leaning to this green leaf
your final grief.

Catherine B. Toosey

Grecian Moth

What is the gods' will, O worm burnished like breaking
bracken spore?
Why will you wander rushing through the grasses'
deepened crushes?
When do you wonder as you roll your brackish brushes
in crossed guard on rainbowed streamlines in heaving
billows and breaks
on without ending like Ulysses where?

What is the gods' will, O worm burnished like breaking
bracken spore
when you scissor nettles to patterns and are thriven?

What is the gods' will, O worm burnished like breaking
bracken spore?
When do you wonder when you swing like Penelope
your head shuttle winding
tragily around your crinkling casings binding
brittling hues and woofing burnt brushings
into density which is a plump chrysalis intricacy why?

What is the gods' will, O worm burnished like breaking
bracken spore
in the revolution of sunny cycles above a grave
moulding?

What is the gods' will when you out your shroud and
sit folded?

The gods' will is a moth like another map: Greece
transfigured
the worm become winged marked like land on light
parchment
wings burnt above wing fire with body tiger slashed.
The gods' will is a tiger moth to be a temple cloth
where shall be mystical adoration of a Grecian moth.

Paul Scott

Mylor Creek

I

To have come out of the abyss; to have risen
from the earth's crust seem similar.
Birth and renewal of birth—both finding
the High Sun and ultimate pleasures of the earth
(to me, long grown familiar)—
there is no difference here.
So I, who found the depths wearisome, climbed
out of the earth's crust. Here I find
my High Sun. Here I am contented again.
I am the worn traveller, shaking the dust
from his boots—sleeping away his spent pain.

II.

To find pleasure again in old books,
rustling the white pages in the cool air
to the sound of the uneven surf
rising and falling—
To have climbed once more out of the earth
and found ugly dreams grown fair
as the gentle curve of Cornish hills
and that low, sweeping streak of golden cloud
with beyond an eternal blue—

Yes, I could sit here and watch
those tiny sails,
feeling almost happy again.
I could compare this shore
with one I knew before my pain
had stretched my limbs
enabling me to reach from shore to shore
but see no beauty anywhere.
But here,—Yes. I could be happy.

If I should hear your voice
like a dim echo, vibrating those steep walls
now green with sea-hands, and sea-care,
this place would be my choice;
these the steep rocks to dare my new life;
though these hands would be the same
that lifted you from those green walls
and pressed your voice against my ear.
They cannot change a name!
Yes, here—this journey's end—
forgetting-place, full with a dozen memories
might be a fitting place
to rest, and plan what will come later in the year.

III.

I have come out of my ark of pain
to watch the floods lessen,
but not before my old world is dead.
From here my sent-out dove
has twice returned,
though now I watch those grey wings
breasting these Cornish hills,
rising to meet my High Sun,
My New Day——
Here though, no frenzied ecstasy
of torn twigs and lessening rain.
Only a slow awakening, a shaking away
of old dust, and quiet sleeping.
A rising out of an old crust—
an old pain.

Margaret Stanley-Wrench

Before

Now flocks of birds are driven before the winter,
Feeling in the mild noons the threat of frost,
That cramps the dawn and rings the pond with ice.
They perch in haw-red hedges or cling among
The holly thickets and the sheltered woods,
Where, winterlong the beeches hold their leaves,
And only dry leaves whirled by the wind, disturb
The Winter's icy silence. The green flocks
Of plovers on ploughland, fieldfares and gulls
Dropping and rising from the milder pastures,
And yellowhammers, yellow as pollen-dusted
Swallows, and the toadstool-coloured breast of a thrush
That still sings before storms with prophecy,
Before the aspen shakes from green to white,
Or the tremor of wind flashes the polar leaves.

But we had felt no warning of our winter,
We picnicked on the green, held bathing parties,
And played under the ominous clot of storms
And clouds dark as a bruise with coming rain,
Caught without a coat, to shrink, cry out,
Turn up coat collars and blame the other man
Who did not tell us winter follows summer,
And that smooth skies in time will crack to snow.

Robin Atthill

This Was Our Wood

For J. McD.

Forget now this wood, forget the Cleveland
afternoons beyond dalehead, when wiry heather
glowed under a burnished sky, or hushed
November sunsets with their frosty glow
hurried us down the nab to the teatime inn;
forget this wood, the cynosure of many
miles together in storm and sun, its dark
and compound mass browing the farthest ridge.

To listen to the secrets the clean winds whispered
on moon-windy nights waiting for morning
to break over Europe. To wonder at trees so
black in the snow-brightness of the winter sun,
snow-dusty branches in the living light.
To fear the bluster of the knife-wind slashing
the island wood, driving the eyes to ground
and spurting the chilled hail against the cheek.

This was our wood: returning from the war,
climb with dumb sorrow in the heart to find
no trees on the desolate corner of the moor,
but only the scarred face of the waste land.
The crowded darkness of the pinewood is become
a fragment of the inaccessible past,
but down the misty corridors of memory
we glimpse the wood that is our yesterday.

Eric Wright

Scarlatti at Night

The tingling weeds of music
sway and swell out into the damp night air,
then, like lost lovers proving their love
return in each other's arms.

Sitting here in the solitude, waiting
and remembering the warm hours,
extant loveliness scarfs me
in chilly magic, like full, cold hands
in early morning, and I
forget the waiting, and only remember
the rippling grace of Scarlatti,
and the blur of beauty in the damp night air.

Nicholas Moore

For Priscilla

Let's go beside the bushes, the bushes, the bushes,
Let's go beside the bushes and listen for a thrush.

And we remember the summer meadow,
The eyes to the north and the south and the east,
Or did they point to another narrower shore,
The breasts ,where the beauties were,
Or looking down from that hill saw the still town.

Berries and berries and berries.

We will remember the little bushfield, my darling,
Down in the narrow grass, the clover,
The lady's-slipper, those charms.
O for under the points of summer
The beautiful and the perfect hides.

Diana Gardner

My Heart Is Like a Little Pellet

My heart is like a little pellet
It neither laughs nor cares.
It sits within me at the theatre
Morose and moribund
Brightening only at Hamlet
Or some of the minor tragedies.
Its little hour has come and gone
When overnight it spread and glowed
Into a vessel of splendid majesty
A recepticle of infinite variety,
Before it cracked and shrivelled to a stone
The size and colour of a walnut
Soaked in vinegar
In a dark enamelled pot.

Neville Braybrooke

The Song of the Lark

Vanity, vain root of all, humanity's recurring call from
sanity to conscious,
keen, compulsory, castle-like conceits—
Conceits once caught the captured, catalogued and
cancelled
With the years of yesterday
Re-find themselves within the fancied fears far fled
behind,—
Yet still inherent in mankind today . . . .
Cast them back, send them back, dismiss them to the
past,
To the memories gone with fleeting time,
To the memories of solitude and wine, to the memories
of you (now mine)
Singing sweetly at my side in the sun's splashing rays
Whose sudden shifting, spotted shafts of light
Played havoc on the sultan's shimmering sands and
the dreary desert dunes.
Never more, my dear, for the lock
Is sealed and shut
And youth's no longer ours though we tinker with
the clock, with our dreams
and with the hours
Trying to recall, to recapture and re-hear the song
of the lark
Now silent, sorrowful and sad . . . .
The song of the lark,
Of the lark.

Ashley Sampson

Wood

The barren thought behind each mind
Takes from your image shape; and swells
To architecture—grave and whole
Where Meaning without shadow dwells.

Men you have taken to your sides
When heaven closed round the wider earth
From land; but wrought a separate womb
Maturing to a second birth.

Summer you hold in Winter's heart
For Memory's sake whose aching mind
Fashions the gold into a lamp
That weathers rain and winds unkind.

When heaven and earth kept each apart
You came into your own—with breast
And arms to bear a Universe
Of sins—breaking to ageless rest.

Margaret Howorth

Self

In the tired eyes
A wizard's curious panorama lies
Come from I know not where
To make me stare.

From a dull throat
Pains of the stabbing ecstasy of song
Lift me athwart the throng
On one clear note.

Through the clogged brain
Swift sharp fantastic phrases shoot
Desiring with travailing pain
To come to fruit.

E. B. W. Chappelow

Horatian Fantasia

The course is run for fawn-fleet Chloe,
Pyrrha, her roses and her lovers,
The voice, the laugh of Lalage,
Blank silence covers.

The lads the Cynthian god who chanted,
The girls the huntress goddess who
The Erymanthian forests haunted,
Are wrapped in silence too.

The Bacchic feasts, the marble cities,
The bronze, the ivory, and the gold,
The twilight whispers, the love-ditties,
Cocytus' waters hold.

Twin-harboured, Corinth, rich Mycenae,
Famed Rhodes, Diana's Ephesus,
Argos, and Sappho's Mytilene,
The years have made but dross;

Dross too Maecenas king-descended;
The Palatine's high halls are down;
Red rust the swords that Rome defended,
The Sabine farm is gone.

Gone are the sceptre and the glory,
The Senate and the laticlave;
The forum's tumults are but story;
All, all, have found the grave.

The night imperial Caesar even
And Tiridates buries deep,
And he, whose nod Olympian heaven
Once shook, now nods in sleep.

But still amid the lyric few
Who wear the Delphic laurel-crown,
Whom nobly dowered with honour due
The serried centuries own,

You strike the stars with head sublime;
Now sad, now glad, your voice comes ringing,
And mocks the impotence of time,
O bard, with perfect singing.

D. J. O'Connor

Song for Autumn

Mind that takes hostage of the spring
Arrest the swallow's southward wing
Before the winds of death dispel
The instant and the beautiful.

Though death itself cannot oppose
The precious logic of the rose,
One by one its petals blow
Across the winter's early snow.

Perpetual, the flower and leaf
Assuage the winter eye of grief
Only because their visions fall
Elusive and ephemeral.

From their extinct reality
Turn to the coloured past and see
How the hordes of memory speak
In phoenix tongues of fire and look

For a dawn that will reveal
The mariner's enchanted sail,
The mermaid's green translucent day,
And all the dolphins in the sea.

REVIEWS

Poems from the Forces, Edited by Keidrich Rhys. Routledge 6/-.

I have read both Mr. Rhys's preface and the poems which he has chosen to illustrate it with great care, because I am conscious in reviewing it that I am, and have been for long, prejudiced against his thesis. While he admits as we must admit, that life in the fabric of the war machine is likely to affect the artist adversely because it makes him smart under a feeling of misplacement and personal waste, yet nevertheless, he is regarding the adverse circumstance as no more than that: the poet is not being permitted to assist the prosecution of the crusade in the way to which he is best fitted, that is, by writing. His grievance is that of the skilled toolmaker conscripted into filling sandbags. Against that, I believe that the true bitterness of military life to the poet is that he must, if his art is in fact a part of his nature, be continually and radically in protest against all the implications of the war, whether he fights or not, and whether, nominally and intellectually, he has convinced himself as Mr. Rhys has done—in part—that the killing is necessary. If I am right, then the artist's malaise arises from the fact that his under-self, the source of his inspiration, is at fundamental variance with what his hands are doing. The final effect is the same as it would be if he produced poetry which he knew to be artistically bad. It is a stultification which no reasoning can overcome.

Mr. Rhys has marshalled his poems against this view, and I have tried to judge the issue again on the facts. On the whole, I cannot feel that he has proved his case. The poems bear the stamp of the surrender against art which I feared that they must bear. It would be so much easier to write in defeated Europe. But Mr. Rhys has made a long overdue attack on the

idiocies of embusque criticism, and has analyzed the poetic quandary in a way which must strike home to every writer, whether he is fighting or refusing to fight. If he confuses the prophetic position of the poet with bohemianism on one hand and the qualities of a good officer on the other, that does not lessen the courage of the attempt at world-interpretation which he and his writers have made.

They are a collection which no circumstance other than the making of this book could possibly have assembled. The poems have some features, however, in common. They are, almost uniformly, not the best work of the poets concerned—Fraser, for example:—none of them attain the cosmic sympathy for the tragedy of every man jack under the rain and the wind which protestant writers like Moore and Greacen have sometimes achieved. There is a group of poems which have their close parallels in the 'Georgian militia—Manifold on *Camouflage* and Sassoon *To Brother Lead*—, Pritchard's *Spring* with Grenfell's—but such comparisons though inevitable are stupid. the same montage bringing the same words and ideas almost unaltered. The tragedy of the war, where it is interpreted, is portrayed through almost unbearable desire, as in Cox's *New Land* and Rhys' own *Letter*, though a sort of uncynical disillusion, which is new, expecting the final fraud quietly, objectively, as in Heppenstall's one striking poem; now and then irrelevantly, and, as one feels was right, hardly at all through horror, which has almost come to have no meaning any more. Throughout one can hear the conflict which I mentioned, the "mixing of guns and nightingales," and the lack of confidence, the finger thinking twice on the trigger. There is no counterpart to Auden's Airman—and nobody attempts to see the armies from star-level, like counters on a board. Classicism was dead before this book appeared, but it serves to measure the magnitude of the swing over.

Especially interesting as writing I found Bowen's startling resuscitation of traditional form with an added tactile imagery not like anything else I have read. Some of the finest recognised talent has gone into the other poems—Hendry, Heppenstall, Fraser, Lewis—and much of the book's importance lies in this cross section of so many groups. I am sorry that Grevase Stewart, one of the first to be killed, isn't here. Perhaps, too, the end of the struggle for a voice against the times *will* ultimately work itself out among the writers who have accepted service. A re-reading of some of Litvinoff's poems has made me think so. And so many schools which never reached their completion have reached it here, largely unnoticed—Activism, for instance, which Bertram Warr's poem on Stepney has suddenly grasped and finished.

Not being with these writers among the actual killing weapons I cannot criticise further. It is untrue that everyone is in this war equally, and the butt of the bayonet leaves more scars than the blade. But this book, with its great technical mastery, its feeling, and its translation into art of an internal conflict so full of the matter of tragedy is a gain for the future more than a dozen won wars.

ALEX COMFORT.

DEATH KNIGHT LOVE AND DEVIL

By Stefan Schimanski.

A striking Fantasy in prose poetry

ILLUSTRATED BY CONROY MADDOX 2/6

Ruins and Visions, by Stephen Spender. Faber and Faber 6/.

This book contains some of Spender's best lyrics. And, taken with his previous work, I think it establishes him as the best poet writing in England to-day.

By this I do not mean that Spender's work is consistently good or that no other poet is capable of writing as well. What I admire in Spender is something quite fundamental, that is the integrity of his attitude towards poetry. Judged by this standard the younger writers come off pretty badly. Yet Spender, who has been a creative force for over ten years now, still shows considerable flexibility of expression. This cannot be said of Auden, whom the new poets have followed into a cul-de-sac from which they are now, rather unintelligently, trying to escape. Spender has not had this devastating influence; therein lies his strength.

Perhaps for this very reason there is a tendency for the younger writers, particularly the so-called Apocalyptics, to reject Spender as a poet of no significance for them. This type of criticism is nearly always misdirected, and something more constructive needs to be said.

In the first place I should say that Spender's verse has developed away from a political, and towards a personal philosophy. This development was considerably influenced by the Spanish war. In the foreword to "The Still Centre" he explicitly states the problem, and his more recent poems have attempted to establish this new centre of reference. This point lies in the poet himself, as an individual in society. And from this point the poet must work out, must communicate. This quality of communication is what distinguishes Spender at once from most other poets of this time who either lose themselves in a welter

of imagery and sound, like Barker, or fix upon an idea and dutifully work it to death, like the Apocalyptics. Spender cannot be called a purposeless or a static poet.

Spender partly achieves this freshness and originality by varying his forms and rhythms. These are not always very felicitous. Where, for instance, is the poetry in the following?:

> Man's mind swims, full of lamps,
> Among the foundations of the epoch.
> Clothes fade to the same curtains
> As night draws over the blaze of flesh.

One can only believe that these lines, and such poems as *The Air Raid across the Bay* and *Dusk*, were conceived and executed at very low pressure. But this instability in Spender is more interesting than the monotonous rhythms of other poets. Here it is worthwhile to note that, although Spender has a certain reputation for free verse, most of his best poems are written in metrical forms where the accent and syllabic content are constantly shifted and modified to avoid monotony. Take for instance:—

> At dawn she lay with her profile at that angle
> Which, sleeping, seems the stone face of an angel.

These lines are very beautiful, expressed with great clarity and economy. Other poems with considerable lyrical grace and power are *No Orpheus, No Eurydice*, *The Journey*, and the third part of *A Wild Race*.

I think that Spender is a good poet for two reasons, Firstly, because he is able to bring his whole sensibility, rather than merely his intellect, to bear on his poetry. Secondly, because he does not write too much. In this way he has kept clear of cliques and remained free to adapt and re-inforce the structure of his verse.

JOHN HALL.

Street Songs, by Edith Sitwell, Macmillan 3/6*d.*

It is some years since we have had a collection of verse from Miss Sitwell. Six or seven of the poems in this book will be familiar to readers of LIFE AND LETTERS TODAY and two appeared in THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT. Her very individual world is made with the same brightly coloured bricks as before. There are many echoes from her earlier work. We are now accustomed to the light of the Judas-coloured sun shining upon the Ape, the tiger and the baited bear to the accompaniment of wolfish howls. The bone as an image has surely had its day. So many poets have told us what we have under our skin. But even the judicial Mr. Spender sitting at his schoolmaster's desk handing out good marks to the poets he likes and orders to rewrite the exercise to the others admits that in this book Miss Sitwell has given us some of her best work. Who else could write such lovely lines as:—

'For she leaned from the light like the Queen of Fairies'

in *An Old Song Re-sung*, one of the good lyrics here which disposes of the theory so dear to the young that after thirty one should not touch the lyre.

Metrically this book shows an interesting advance with many new variations of rhythm. She is not content, as too many established poets are, to serve up again a dish prepared with masterly but unaltering technique. These poems prove that her art is developing. And that is the mark of the great Artist. *Most Lovely Shade* is a return to the manner of *Metamorphosis*, the pomp and splendour of the seventeenth century. The last poem *An Old Woman* I found deeply moving and full of the rarely caught note of great poetry. *Street Songs* is very civilized verse with its roots deep in the centuries behind us. Is it the summer rain to water our despairs?

WREY GARDINER.

Brief Reviews

A Little Book of Modern Verse. Edited by Anne Ridler. Faber 3/6*d.*

An extremely competent piece of compiling by Mrs. Ridler. It contrives exactly what it sets out to contrive, and is one of those rare collections equally suited to the reader and the student without losing validity for either. For the first, it is light, comprehensive and a sensible size; for the second, it should be a godsend in intelligent senior English classes. The selection gives an excellent picture of the growth of style in this century: it is good to see Scarfe, Durrell, Treece and Todd included. Eliot's preface is admirable. Altogether well worth the price.

Prose Chants and Poems by Ross Nichols. Fortune, 5/-.

On the whole foppish and undistinguished. A good deal of space is given to word-games which remind one of Doriadas and some of the later and more tiresome Sicilians. An exception is the first poem in the book, where the anagram is harnessed to a form of Empsonian imagery which succeeds rather well. Well bound, a rarity today.

Eight Oxford Poets. Routledge 2/6*d.*

There has been very little in the way of poetry from Oxford these many days, and this book is a little disappointing. Apart from Heath-Stubbs' *Leporello*, which is an original piece of Browning-Hervey Allen romanticism, the only poem is Keyes' *Remember your Lovers*. One feels there must be better work in Oxford somewhere.

The Fatal Landscape by G. S. Fraser. PL Pamphlets 1/-.

An interesting collection, showing Fraser in a new light as a very incisive and effective satirist, but not doing justice to the real dignity of his serious lyric.

A full gathering of his work is overdue. *The Pattern of History* is one of his best poems, where his clarity and precision come into their own.

Buzzing Around with a Bee by Nicholas Moore. PL Pamphlets 1/-.

These last poems of Moore's seem, probably intentionally, less decisive than those of *A wish in Season*. His most important discovery is the projection of England's calamity into the happy experience of his own marriage, and he writes of this new myth with sincerity and simplicity. His image has an amazing psychological accuracy. There is a glorious cartoon of Nicholas and Priscilla on the jacket.

The Swallow Lovers, (George Sims; Grey Walls Press, 1/6*d.*).

Has real lyrical impulse and competence of language. I believe this is a first book. If so it is a good one, though over-conscious and lush in places. "The casual impulse of the blood" is a memorable line.

Poems from Ulster. Edited by Robert Greacen. Erskine Mayne 1/-.

Important as the first appearance here of Greacen and Macfadden, of whom we shall be hearing again very soon. One most striking poem by Brooks. I didn't know Moore was an Irishman, and I'm sure I am not.

A.C.

RECOMMENDED:—

A Little Book of Modern Verse (*Faber*).

The Swallow Lovers by George Sims (*Grey Walls Press*).

Poems From Ulster (*Erskine Mayne, Belfast*).

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